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ABSTRACT

Part of a series on safe, drug-free, and effective schools, this monograph discusses developing school and community partnerships to assist students with behavior problems. It begins by offering a general description of the student with challenging behaviors and the determination of the student's placement in the least restrictive environment. Levels of intervention are reviewed. The monograph then highlights several effective school-community partnerships designed to meet the many challenging and complex needs of students with behavior problems and their families. These include Aggression Replacement Training and the Buddy System; family/home community partnerships, including family groups and resource centers; and partnerships with the greater community, including the Discover 15 Space Shuttle Project, vocational programs, and service project days. The following chapter discusses two partnership program models: service learning and project based learning. The final chapters discuss designing curricula to meet community expectations and three essential components of all good school-community partnerships: high-quality leadership and dedicated personnel, a well-developed purpose and plan for the program, strong community partnerships, and a strong sense that positive and enduring changes can occur in the students served by the program. (Contains 18 references.) (CR)

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Developing School and Community Partnerships to Meet the Needs of Students with Challenging Behaviors

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The Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

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CASE/CCBD MINI-LIBRARY SERIES
Safe, Drug-Free, and Effective Schools

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About the Council of Administrators of Special Education

CASE is an international and professional organization committed to facilitating the education and general welfare of students with disabilities. CASE promotes professional leadership and provides special education administrators with opportunities for personal and professional development.

Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

About the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

CCBD is an international and professional organization committed to promoting and facilitating the education and general welfare of children and youth with behavioral and emotional disorders. CCBD, whose members include educators, parents, mental health personnel, and a variety of other professionals, actively pursues quality educational services and program alternatives for persons with behavioral disorders, advocates for the needs of such children and youth, emphasizes research and professional growth as vehicles for better understanding behavioral disorders, and provides professional support for persons who are involved with and serve children and youth with behavioral disorders.

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Foreword

Nationwide, school personnel are working to ensure every student a safe, drug-free, quality education. There is no doubt about either the importance or complexity of that task. With mounting pressure to ensure student safety, some school divisions have adopted a so-called zero-tolerance policy of student discipline. No one would quarrel with the original intent of zero tolerance, namely, to protect students from dangerous weapons in schools. However, some authorities do question the logic behind applying the same philosophy to less serious offenses, such as when a student fails to participate in class discussion. Others argue that there are discrepancies in the way current disciplinary policies are being applied. Evidence exists that students from culturally diverse backgrounds often are disproportionately subjected to more severe treatment. A similar concern has been voiced on behalf of students with disabilities. Increasingly, administrators, teachers, and parents are calling for a reasonable middle ground in addressing the issue of student discipline.

At the same time, schools are finding that some established instructional practices are at odds with the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Although we are witnessing an increase in the use of curricular materials and instructional procedures that reflect greater cultural sensitivity, there is more to be done in this area. With these issues in mind, it is encouraging to find a growing acceptance that a reciprocal relationship exists between learning and behavior problems and that it is shortsighted to address one and ignore the other. Accordingly, more and more administrators, faculty, and staff are redefining the culture of their schools and creating a climate in which school-wide and

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classroom-level positive academic and behavior supports are in place for all students.

Further impetus for changing current practices stems from the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which contains provisions that address both the academic and nonacademic performance of students with disabilities. For example, IDEA stipulates that education personnel must not only acknowledge the connection between learning and behavior problems, but also, under certain conditions, take specific steps to address the problem(s). If a student's classroom behavior impedes his or her academic progress or that of classmates, it may signal a need to change one or more aspects of the curriculum, management, or instruction. In limited instances, schools must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and then develop a positive behavioral intervention plan and supports. In that way, more serious learning or behavior problems (usually both) can be addressed.

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) have long shared a common concern about students with and without disabilities. In light of the challenges faced in schools, the leaders of these two divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) decided to cosponsor two institutes on best practices for working with students with learning and behavior problems. We drew upon the expertise of our members to produce a mini-library series that corresponds with the content of these institutes. We are grateful to those who served as both presenters and authors. We also acknowledge those who served as reviewers of these volumes: Charlene Greene (CASE), Bev Johns (CCBD), Bev McCoud (CASE), Russ Skiba (CCBD), Cheryl Zinszer (CASE), John Faust (CASE), and Jim McCormick (CASE). Together, they have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the challenges of 21st century schools.

Lyndal M. Bullock, Jim Chapple, and Robert A. Gable
Series Editors

Introduction 1

The old cliché "Take a picture, it lasts longer" can be applied to many situations. We cannot recall images of the first few years of our lives, nor can we be sure that our memories will last a lifetime. However, those memories that have a significant impact on us remain for a long time—even a lifetime. Viewing a picture can bring back memories of people, places, events, sounds, smells, and even sometimes words that were spoken, as if the whole scene were just experienced. For many people, these memories are pleasant, bringing smiles to their faces, laughter to their voices, or tears to their eyes. However, for many behaviorally challenged students, memories can be painful. An unsuspected word or action may elicit painful images of people, places, and events that are beyond their coping abilities.

Students attempt to cope in various ways. They may withdraw or act out, seek security in gangs, or seek peace of mind in drugs and alcohol. Many families have fallen on hard times. Parent unemployment, substance abuse, spousal abuse, or homelessness can all have a very negative effect on a child's life—socially, emotionally, behaviorally, psychologically, and academically. Once children begin to attend school, a significant portion of their lives centers around being in school and doing homework. Although they may be intellectually prepared for school, they may be lacking in the necessary social, emotional, and/or behavioral skills necessary to achieve their fullest potential.

The purpose of this monograph is twofold. First, we will highlight several effective school-community partnerships designed to meet the many challenging and complex needs of behaviorally challenged students and their families. Second, we will provide specific models for building school-community partnerships that

will have a positive impact on all who participate and, most important, create memories that will continually nurture the overall sense of well-being of students with behavioral challenges.

We begin by offering a general description of the student with challenging behaviors. The term *emotionally or behaviorally disordered (E/BD)* refers to students who are classified as having an emotional disturbance; other students may not have that disability, but because they are exhibiting challenging behaviors, they are considered to be at risk. Next, we define the term *community* by dividing the overall community into three segments and defining each segment, along with program examples and their benefits and challenges. Then, we present three models that are useful in developing effective school-community partnerships. Finally, we focus special attention on the needs of students and school personnel within alternative school settings.

2

The Behaviorally Challenged Student

The identification of students thought to be eligible for services under the category of behavioral or emotional disorders (E/BD) is the responsibility of a team of school personnel selected by the school to evaluate student referrals (e.g., a pupil personnel services team in some states). Evaluations focus on adaptive behavior assessments, psychological evaluations, teacher reports, parent interviews, and administrative documentation of significant problems that interfere with the student's ability to access the educational opportunities of a general education classroom, at least without significant support. These behavior problems may be viewed as mild, moderate, or severe.

Determination of Placement

Assistance to the classroom teacher, placement outside of class, or even placement out of the school is determined based on the student's level of need and nature of supports/assistance. Intervention or assistance is planned with the idea of maintaining the student in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The concept of LRE is fundamental to protecting all children receiving special education from removal from the general education experience, but it is particularly important for students identified with E/BD. If a child can be maintained in a general education classroom in his or her regular school, or in an alternative placement in another general education school close to home, the placement is not considered very restrictive. However, if a child's behavioral or emotional difficulties are so serious that they cannot be addressed without significant environmental modification, and the child is

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placed in an alternative school for children with severe E/BD, then that placement is considered seriously restrictive. Since the goal of special education is to move students to less restrictive environments and eventually to reintegrate them into the general education classroom, then education personnel in more restrictive settings face a complex job, especially in their efforts to provide educational experiences that are aligned with the general education curriculum.

Levels of Intervention

Assistance for students identified as having E/BD can be indirect or direct. A common indirect form of assistance is offering teachers consultation with a specialist who has expertise in classroom interventions for students with mild and/or infrequent but troublesome behaviors. More intrusive (i.e., more restrictive) intervention assistance might consist of in-class observation, monitoring, or hands-on work with the identified child, as well as other children, while the teacher instructs the rest of the class. This is most appropriate if there is a particular situation or lesson content that triggers an unwanted behavior. Somewhat more direct assistance might be to enlist support personnel (e.g., social worker, psychologist) in selecting certain students in the class to work together on focused, appropriate behavior practice, which may include such behaviors as sharing, following the rules and expectations, and resolving conflicts with words.

Slightly more restrictive interventions may involve removing the child from the classroom to receive so-called pull-out services. This does not require that the student be formally identified as having E/BD. However, if the child is assigned to attend class(es) in a resource room staffed by an E/BD specialist, then such classification is necessary. As long as this removal is for less than 50% of the instructional day, the placement is not considered self-contained, which is defined as the student receiving the majority of his or her education outside of the regular classroom. Students who need more than 50% of their instruction in a classroom staffed by an E/BD teacher may display moderate to severe learning and/or behavior problems.

Another program option is to retain the student in the general education setting by means of placement full time (with the possible exceptions of lunch, recess, and assemblies) in a specialized class that is within his or her regular school. The most restrictive school placement prior to residential placement is in an alternative school dedicated to students with severe E/BD.

Because E/BD is an educational classification, and not a clinical diagnosis, the standards for such classification may vary somewhat depending on the expectations of the community. Therefore, behavior that might be considered to be mild or even acceptable in one school setting might be viewed as moderate to severe in another. Since the determinant is whether or not the child and the child's classmates are receiving a free, appropriate public education (FAPE), the standard for *appropriate* is interpreted very broadly; therefore, such a standard is not very instructive for any particular situation. Such extraneous factors as parent cooperativeness in the evaluation and the parents' ability to arrange for private or other community help in addressing behaviors, or community expectations for other children's safety may affect the standard for appropriateness. Also, research has shown that teacher tolerance and/or expectations can have a significant effect on students' experiences in a given classroom and whether the behavior in question falls within the normal limit or reflects the behavior of students with E/BD.

For various reasons, some students with E/BD engage in behavior that results in serious disruption in classroom instruction. This may take the form of verbal threats, fighting or threatening to fight, throwing materials in the classroom, or harming or threatening to harm the adult(s). A student may be unable to control outbursts; may not always be able to relate to what is going on in the classroom, making extraneous responses or fantasy responses; may be verbally abusive to other students or the instructor(s); or may harass or intimidate other students. Other students may be unresponsive to teacher requests or simply not be engaged in classroom discussion or activities. The severity, frequency, and diversity of these behaviors are important concomitants of the student's disabling condition. Age, educational

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abilities, intellectual development, and social skills also play a part in determining the extent of a student's need for specialized services.

One area of specialized service that is sometimes overlooked pertains to school-community partnerships, which we will turn to in the next chapter.

3

Defining the Community

As Epstein (1995) stated,

> There are many reasons for developing school, family and community partnerships. They can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work. However, the main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life.

These partnerships take on even greater importance when focused on the student at risk for or classified as having E/BD. To better understand the significance that school-community partnerships have for students, we must formulate a definition of community. For the purposes of this monograph, the community is defined as comprising three parts: the education community, the family/home community, and the greater community. In the following discussion, we examine each of these three community constructs, their general make-up, and their relative importance to the school-community partnership, especially as they relate to students classified as having E/BD.

The Education Community

The education community (Figure 1) is made up of the individual school, the school district, and the neighboring school districts. The community within an individual school consists of the stu-

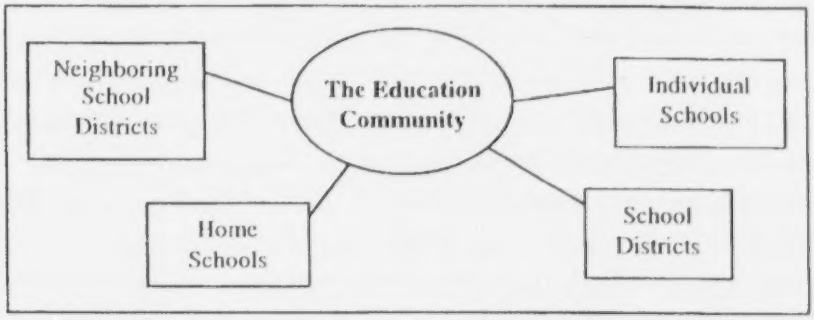

FIGURE 1. The Education Community

dents and all school personnel (e.g., teachers, support staff, administrators). When viewed as members of the school community, school personnel become partners, and their talents and expertise can be used to meet the needs of students.

The school district community consists of all schools within the district, including the district office(s). To state the obvious, partnership between schools is of great importance, since many of their students—especially those with special needs—will move between schools from least restrictive to more restrictive environments. Also, there may be various district-wide programs that can potentially have a significant impact on the performance and self-esteem of students classified as having E/BD

The community of neighboring school districts consists of those schools that generally send and/or receive students from a particular school district. For example, CCSD 15, located in Palatine, Illinois, transfers students to two high school districts, 211 and 214, both of which have alternative day schools for special education. These districts assign personnel to come to The Learning Academy (an alternative school) to speak to the seventh- and eighth-grade students about life and opportunities at their anticipated high school placements. Such visits can increase student motivation to improve behavior and decrease anxiety about going off to high school. Another benefit to developing partnerships with other districts is improved communication and transition planning to ensure that a student's special needs will be addressed at the new school.

Program Examples for the Education Community

According to an article from *The Informed Educator Series* of the Educational Research Service ("Enhancing Student Engagement," 1998) from a constructivist perspective learning is the creation of meaning that occurs when an individual links new knowledge with the context of existing knowledge. The following program examples were implemented by The Learning Academy (TLA) in Rolling Meadow, Illinois, to build school-wide partnerships with the purpose of linking the students' existing knowledge with new knowledge provided through hands-on experiences—a basic educational concept, *knowledge linking*, that currently supports a variety of TLA learning experiences.

Aggression Replacement Training

One of the goals of any program focusing on the specific needs of students classified as having or being at risk for developing E/BD is to build a knowledge base in each student consisting of skills that will enhance the student's quality of life. At TLA this knowledge is taught through the implementation of the therapeutic program Aggression Replacement Training (ART). This knowledge is then solidified through the new knowledge achieved during hands-on experiences.

Aggression Replacement Training is a research-based program developed in St. Louis and based on the teachings of Arnold Goldstein. It teaches anger management, empathy, social skills, and character education. The staff members of TLA have committed themselves to the program and its continuous development and implementation based upon the needs of TLA students. Aggression Replacement Training is given for a minimum of 1 hour a day, 4 days a week. The 5th day is set aside for service projects, which will be discussed later in this monograph.

In addition to the 1 hour of training, the staff have dedicated themselves to developing a more positive and effective school community culture through incorporating the ART vocabulary and skills into the academic curriculum and the language used by students and staff. They have also begun to implement both formal and informal data-collection methods to assess the impact of

ART on the students' behaviors and attitudes. It is too early to assess the data accurately; however, simple observation reveals that some of the students have incorporated the language into their vocabulary and the skills into their behavior. Also, the teachers have incorporated various ART concepts into their daily academic curriculum.

The Buddy System

The Buddy System was launched during the 1999/2000 school year through the collaborative efforts of the school social worker for the early childhood (EC) program and the school social worker for the E/BD program. The structure of the program is designed to match intermediate and junior high students with E/BD and at-risk junior high students with a specific early childhood classroom. The purpose of the Buddy System is twofold: (a) to provide the students with and at risk for E/BD an opportunity to apply their ART lessons and skills as they interact with the EC students and (b) to make available to the EC students services provided by the older buddy students. The goals of the program are as follows

1. To increase the self-esteem, sense of responsibility, and awareness of the value of the ART lessons of the students with and at risk of developing E/BD.
2. To provide positive mentorship to the EC students
3. To develop a school-wide sense of community between teachers and support staff of the E/BD, At-Risk, and EC programs.

A description of each component of the Buddy System follows. Figure 2 diagrams the program's flow from start to finish.

Components of the Buddy System

1. *Teacher/clinician meeting:* An informal meeting in which students are selected for the Buddy System.
2. *Coordinators meeting:* A formal meeting in which the coordinators pair the students (buddies) with EC classrooms based

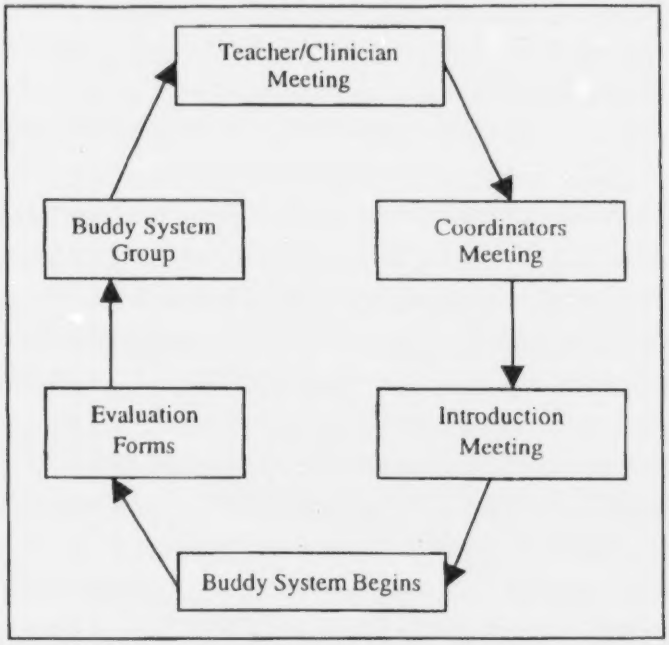

FIGURE 2. Buddy System Flow Chart

upon the students' independence, personalities, and academic abilities.

3. *Introductory meeting:* A formal meeting informing potential buddy candidates about the program, formally asking for their participation, and signing a contract of commitment for a 6-week term.
4. *Buddy System begins:* The buddies begin serving in the classrooms under the direct supervision of the EC teachers. Their responsibilities may consist of reading, playing games, assisting in art activities, working with a specific child, or any other of a variety of creative ideas planned by the EC teacher.
5. *Evaluation forms:* These are distributed to the EC teachers and buddies at the end of the commitment period, asking both to evaluate the students' performance.
6. *Buddy System group:* Facilitated by the coordinators, this is a time of discussion regarding the buddies' experiences, the lessons they have learned, and the teachers' evaluations. Also, the

buddies are asked whether they would like to recommit to another term in the program. (No contract is signed at this time.)

Based upon preliminary data consisting of demographics, staff/student evaluation forms, and informal discussions with staff, the following are possible benefits of the program. First, approximately 75% of the buddies have agreed to recommit for at least one additional term. Second, EC students have often been observed showing excitement and saying Hello to their buddies when passing in the halls. Third, the buddies have reported successful spontaneous applications of their ART skills. These spontaneous applications provide an opportunity for the buddies to internalize the importance of the ART skills. Fourth, a greater sense of community has begun to develop between the staff of the E/BD and At-Risk program and the EC program. The EC staff has gained a greater understanding of students classified as having or being at risk for E/BD. Also, a sense of partnership is emerging among the staff that contributes to the social, emotional, and behavioral development of all students involved.

The best confirmation of these benefits is found in the written words of the buddies and the EC teachers. One of the questions on the student evaluation form asks, "What did you learn from the Buddy System?" One student wrote, "That I have to be careful," referring to her behavior, attitude, and (at times) language. Another student wrote, "Some kids have problems and you have to work more with them." This statement acknowledges the student's sense of understanding and compassion for the EC students. A question on the teacher evaluation form asks, "What did you like about the Buddy System in regard to the student?" One EC teacher wrote that the student was "great with the kids. I was able to set him up with the activity, and then he worked on it independently." Another EC teacher wrote that the student "started the program being very quiet and shy, but she began to be able to work more with the students the longer she was with us. It was good to see her begin to grow into the position." This student worked four terms as a buddy.

One of the greatest challenges to the Buddy System is the implementation of the program at the beginning of each school year. This challenge occurs for two reasons. First, the population of students classified as being at risk for or having E/BD is low at the start of the school year as a result of students' graduating, transitioning back to their home schools, or simply moving away from the area. This lower population produces a limited number of students eligible to participate in the program. Second, a few new students may be enrolled but are at the first level of a five-level behavior management system. Students at Level One may not possess the self-management skills, sense of responsibility, or ability to function independently that are necessary to work successfully with the EC teachers and their students. Another challenge pertains to scheduling conflicts between EC classes, E/BD and At-Risk classes, therapeutic services, and/or transitioning times. Not only do the scheduling conflicts affect the matching of the buddies with an EC classroom, but these conflicts also inhibit the staff from leaving their classrooms to observe their students interacting with the EC students.

Sometimes it is easy to overlook possible program resources. There may be a wealth of resources within the educational community, including opportunity to strengthen transition services between schools by visiting the classroom to which the student will transition and opportunity to use the resources within the district, such as various programs and activities that already are in place for students with behavior challenges. Building partnerships within the educational community costs little, if any, money. The success of these partnerships stems from the talents and generosity of the educational community.

The Family/Home Community

For many students, the term *family* or *home* extends well beyond the boundaries of what many people may imagine constitutes a family or home. Germain (1991), in her book *Human Behavior in the Social Environment: An Ecological View*, offered a definition of the family from the work of Hartman and Laird (1984): "A family

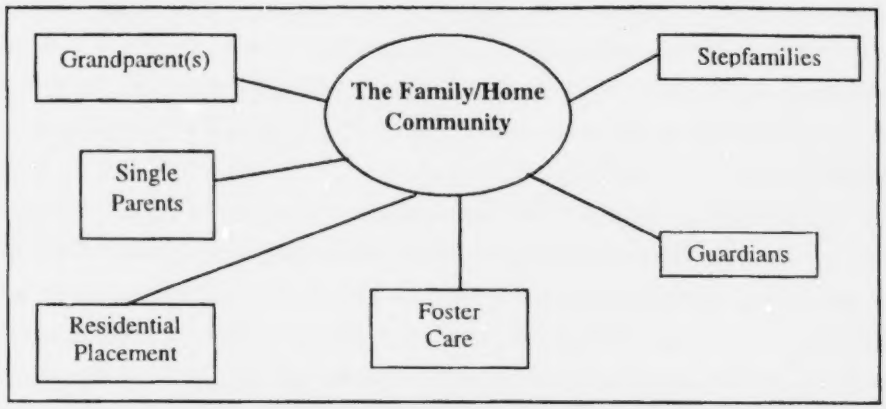

FIGURE 3. The Family/Home Community

becomes a family when two or more individuals have decided they are a family, that in the intimate . . . environment in which they gather, there is a sharing of emotional needs for closeness, of living space which is deemed 'home,' and of those roles and tasks necessary for meeting the biological, social, and psychological requirements of the individuals involved" (p. 93).

To gain an understanding of the challenges associated with building partnerships between schools and families of the population of students with E/BD, it is important to look at the family/home environment (Figure 3). Today, the family/home environment includes stepparents and their children and relatives, single parents, grandparents caring for their grandchildren, adults caring for their children and their parents (i.e., the Sandwich Generation), legal guardians, primary care providers, residential facility staff and children, foster families, and so on. Just by reading this list, one can begin to imagine both the difficulties and importance of building school and family/home partnerships specific to meeting the needs of students classified as having or being at risk for E/BD. In an effort to provide a high-quality education to students with E/BD, a school representative (teacher, clinician, administrator) may work in a variety of environments, including the two-parent, never-divorced family. For our purposes, the family/home environment is broadly defined as those individuals, other than educational personnel, who have

a significant impact (positive or negative) on the student's social, emotional, psychological, and educational well-being.

A report by the U.S. Department of Education on parent involvement in education stated that three decades of research show that parental participation in schooling improves student learning significantly. Liontos (1991) reported that there is substantial research linking family involvement to both the academic and social success of children at school. However, Liontos further asserted that traditional methods of parental involvement do not work with parents of students at risk for developing E/BD. Barriers to involvement of parents of these students include feelings of inadequacy, failure, and poor self-worth; cultural issues (e.g., language barriers); and more common logistical problems (e.g., lack of child care and/or transportation, scheduling conflicts). The National PTA (2001) also identified logistical problems, including time, money, scheduling, transportation, child care, and working outside the home, all of which make it difficult for parents to volunteer or attend meetings at school. According to Epstein (1995), administrators and teachers would like to involve families in their children's schooling, but many do not know how to build positive and productive programs and are fearful about trying to do so. Suggestions for promoting parent involvement identified in the Policy Guidance for Title 1, Part A ("Parent Involvement," 1996) include the following:

- All parents and families want the best for their children and can help them succeed.
- The benefits of parental involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary grades; parental involvement provides strong benefits to children through high school.
- Leaders among parents must be recognized as special, and schools should take care to nurture their continued involvement; schools should continuously nurture new parent leaders.
- People and organizations will stretch to meet the needs of the program in creative and innovative ways.
- Children do best when parents are enabled to play four key roles in their children's learning: teacher (helping children at

home), supporter (contributing their skills to the school), advocate (helping children receive fair treatment), and decision maker (participating in joint problem solving with the school at every level).

In light of the research that clearly supports parent involvement, and with the knowledge that parent involvement is often limited, it is easy to understand why it is so important to develop and implement programs to build strong partnerships between schools and the family/home community.

Program Examples for the Family/Home Community

Family Groups

One way to increase family involvement is to offer family group programs that focus on the relationship between the student and the parent/family. At The Learning Academy, ART lessons are adapted to meet the diverse needs of families and to educate the families on the language and process of ART skills. The expectation is that a common language and common application of skills between the school and the family will build greater consistency and improve the student's behavior both at school and in the home. Also, this consistency can set the stage for promoting the generalization of behaviors learned at school to other settings. The groups are 6 weeks long and are offered twice a year in the fall and spring. The group meeting consists of five components: Introduction, ART Lesson, Family Game Time, Snack Time, and Wrap-Up. During the introduction period, new attendees are introduced and an "icebreaker" activity is conducted. Next, an ART lesson is taught. A specific skill is discussed, taught, and then practiced by the family through the use of role plays. Following this lesson, during Game Time, the individual families select a game to play among themselves. This also is a time for the group leader to guide the families in the practice of their ART skills. Snack Time begins after the games have started and just before Wrap-Up time. One special feature of this portion of the family group program is that the snacks are prepared by the students

during an after-school meeting, and the children serve their parents what they have made. Wrap-Up is a time for reviewing the events of that session and straightening and cleaning up the games and food.

Family/parent groups can take on many forms and, like any high-quality program, must be designed to meet the specific needs of the attendees. It is important to be aware of the fluid nature of what constitutes a family or home and that not all students share the same environment. The group coordinators must determine whether to restrict a group to parents only or to include residential staff, a decision that is based on the purpose of the group. In the case of TLA, the goal of the groups is to educate those who provide direct care to students on various ART skill areas, to improve the quality of social/interpersonal interactions between students and their primary care providers and, in turn, to positively influence the students' behavior in the family/home setting.

Three potential benefits of the groups areas are as follows:

1. A commonality in language will be established between home and school that increases the parents' confidence in working with their children to apply the ART skills used at school.
2. The coordinator(s) can get a greater understanding of the dynamics of child-parent interactions.
3. A foundation can be created for a more positive and productive relationship between the parents and school.

Despite the potential benefits, there are many challenges associated with family/school community groups that must be overcome before positive outcomes can begin. From a school's point of view, the most obvious challenge is getting parents to attend the group. Resolving this problem poses other challenges, such as group scheduling, transportation, child care, and interpreters, all of which can affect parent attendance. Another challenge is developing cohesiveness within the group. Tolson, Reid, and Garvin (1994) applied Festinger's (1950) description of cohesiveness, which is the result of all the forces that are acting on the members to remain in the group. These forces can range from the logistical

challenges we have highlighted to the selection of discussion topics that address the needs of those attending the meeting, to the level of self-disclosure among the group members.

Resource Centers

Today, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, gangs, violence, unsafe sexual practices, teenage pregnancy and single parenthood, inadequate health care, poor housing, and/or homelessness are problems common to many families living in poverty-stricken urban areas. Not surprisingly, a sense of hopelessness and despair often pervades the lives of children who see their parents and other loved ones succumb to the pressures of poverty and see little chance of doing better. However, these feelings are by no means limited to urban areas or the children of low-income parents. Many students with E/BD are living lives affected by the poor, potentially dangerous decisions made by themselves and/or their parents.

Poertner and Dupper (1998) have discussed a school-linked family resource center movement that helps children in the community to grow and develop in a safe family home, obtain an education in a normal school setting, and become productive members of the community. Advocates believe that meeting the basic needs of the parent, child, and family through linking them with necessary services will improve overall student performance. Schools frequently are at the center of the community and can provide a variety of services such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and general equivalency diploma (GED) classes as well as providing other services to parents and families such as legal advice and medical care. Also, locating the center at the school encourages parent involvement, parent-school personal interaction, and student attendance. As Poertner and Dupper (1998) pointed out, these resource centers can take many forms.

One such center, started by Yale professor James P. Comer, is in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Drawing on feedback from Bowling Green parents, the center offers adult education courses, exercise classes, and a once-a-month Family Breakfast Club. An additional feature of the program is the adoption of students by school

staff members. That is, the program encourages staff members to become involved in a student's life beyond the classroom. Examples of this involvement include taking the youngster out to eat, to get a haircut, or home for the weekend. Parent involvement is critical to the success of the program, and improved academic test scores, a near-perfect attendance rate, and a significant increase in the number of parents who come into the school attest to the success of the program.

The Ellis School, located in Boston, also has a parent center—a room in the school that has been dedicated to meeting the needs of parents, empowering parents, and increasing parent involvement within the school. Activities at the Ellis Center provide examples of what schools can offer to parents. A few of these activities are listed below (Davies, 1991):

- Breakfasts that are held and organized by grade level or are specific to fathers. These breakfasts are intended to bring together family members and school personnel to talk about curriculum, grade-level objectives, and classroom concerns.
- A referral service that links parents with social services, housing, health agencies, and other services.
- A clothing exchange and a children's books and toys library.

Based on the Ellis Center, Davies has identified five components for a working parent center: a physical space; adult-sized tables and chairs; a paid staff of parents; a telephone; and a coffeepot, hot plate, and occasional snacks.

While the benefits of a parent resource center are many, a major challenge facing those who establish such a center is sustaining the program for the long haul. In that many programs are tied to the energy and enthusiasm of the one or a few individuals who created them, it is important to build an organizational framework to sustain these efforts, with or without those individuals. Ways to meet this challenge include

- Conducting a program evaluation to show that the program is meeting its original goals as well as to demonstrate the overall effectiveness of the program.

- Working to organize a constituency that demands that these programs are maintained in the community.

Understanding the contemporary family poses numerous challenges when we consider that a student's family can be made up of two parents and siblings, a residential facility staff member, or anything in between. As we have discussed, traditional methods of building partnerships with families often do not work with the families of students who have behavior problems. Many of these families are not involved in their son's or daughter's education for a number of reasons: family work schedules; family attitudes toward the school (and vice-versa); and issues surrounding transportation, child care, and their own self-worth. It follows that schools must be creative and willing to reach beyond their comfort zone in order to increase the involvement of parents and families of students with behavioral challenges

The Greater Community

The term *greater community* represents the portion of the community that has minimal influence on decisions that directly affect students, but holds knowledge, skills, talents, and resources that can positively influence students' education and self-esteem (Figure 4). Examples of the greater community include churches, social service organizations, local businesses, emergency service personnel (i.e., police, firefighters, hospital employees), and local residents. This portion of the community is a valuable resource, ranging from direct service opportunities to being a generous source of funding. The police, firefighters, and hospital personnel can provide safety training and career information while increasing a student's respect for the jobs they perform. Churches, social service agencies, and local residents provide volunteer opportunities that allow the students to gain an awareness of and respect for the community in which they live. These volunteer opportunities also encourage students to serve others in a way that is non-threatening to their peer image. Local business personnel and residents are a rich source of gifted individuals who are willing to tutor and mentor students, if given the opportunity. In addition to

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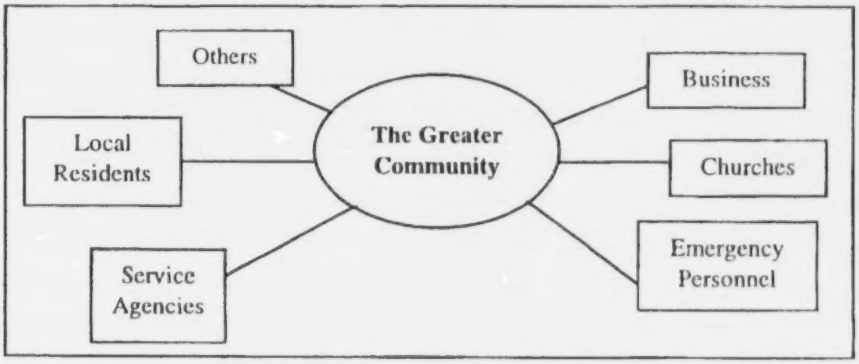

FIGURE 4. The Greater Community

providing tutors and mentors, local businesses often are willing to assist individual schools and school districts through private funding in the form of contributions and grants.

Program Examples for the Greater Community

Discover 15 Space Shuttle Project

From 1995 through 1997, in a collaborative effort between Community Consolidated School District 15 and several area businesses and civic organizations, the Discover 15 Space Shuttle Program was created (Community Consolidated School District 15, 2001). In 1997, the project was launched in 15 schools. The shuttle is 47 feet long from the nose cone to the main engines, 13 feet in width from wing tip to wing tip, and is built on the frame of a school bus. The program provides the community with ways to excite and engage students in simulated space shuttle missions and to encourage student interest in science and math. Students are selected from each school and must have achieved at a certain level in science and math. Beyond academics, the students must be able to learn to function as teams, consisting of a captain and a team of astronauts on the shuttle and another team at mission control. Participants can be directly taught to work together to solve numerous problems that may occur during their flight, from the time the shuttle is launched until it lands at Cape Canaveral, Florida.

The shuttle project reaches far into the community, since area residents can view the shuttle as it drives down the local roads. Businesses and civic organizations such as the local Honda dealership, NASA, the Northrop Grumman Corporation, area Jaycees, the Planetary Studies Foundation, and United Visual all have contributed to the project.

In addition to the space shuttle project, the school district sends 20 junior high students with special needs to the U.S. Space Academy in Huntsville, Alabama, for a week-long mission. While there, the students participate in a variety of activities, including a shuttle launch simulation, a Space Trivia Bowl, and classes on rocket design and launch. The students also have the opportunity to compete against successful general education students and receive awards in Mission Patch Design, Space Bowl, and Best Rocket Launch.

These interactions can be especially useful for students with E/BD, since they can gain an appreciation for other students who may think and behave differently from themselves. Also, the students' confidence in their own behavior is strengthened as they complete each phase of the project, compete at Space Camp, and develop academic skills through experiences outside the walls of their school and the boundaries of their community.

Vocational Program

Another example of school/community partnerships to meet the needs of special education students occurred in Bergen County, New Jersey. In 1988, through the collaborative efforts of the Bergen County Vocational Schools, Wakefern/ShopRite, and Cornell University, in-school "supermarkets" were created by Wakefern engineers and associates and operated by students in special education classes in Bergen County ("Special Needs Students Learn New Skills," 1996). Approximately 1,000 students have been involved, and more than 400 students have graduated successfully from the program.

A specific model for the program was not spelled out in the literature; however, a few key general guidelines can be identi-

fied. First, the superintendent of vocational schools approached Wakefern/ShopRite with the idea. Second, employees of Wakefern/ShopRite solicited the help of Cornell University and Wakefern engineers and associates to design and install the in-school minisupermarkets. Third, students were trained on skills needed for running a successful store. Such training consisted of job attitudes, customer relations, interpersonal skills, and the importance of a good work ethic. Fourth, a shadowing program was established that placed students in local supermarkets to shadow store associates to learn about the day-to-day application of academics.

Many of the program graduates work at ShopRite stores within the community, and the supervisors' feedback has been overwhelmingly positive regarding their performance. Supervisors report that the graduates are "always at work, always punctual, . . . always giving 100%, . . . have a positive attitude, and a smile on their faces" ("Special Needs Students Learn New Skills," 1996). This recognition has extended beyond the local community. As of May 1996, there were some 40 Supermarket Careers classrooms located in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Delaware. Finally, the program has been recognized by several organizations, including the Council for Exceptional Children, as Employer of the Year. The uniqueness of this program and its success hinge on the fact that youngsters are given the opportunity to work, thrive, and be a successful part of the community in which they live.

Service Project Days

The Learning Academy designates each Friday as a service project day. This is a day reserved for specific hands-on activities, field trips, speakers, or special assemblies that focus on the value, application, and enhancement of students' skills. Field trips have included visits to diverse sites, including a local car dealership and a junior college drama department, so the students can observe how teamwork, perseverance, and goal setting are personally and financially rewarding in real life. Assemblies have

included a theater group that focused on the negative effects of drug use and the value of positive peer relations. Also, TLA students have joined with other district students to perform concerts in the Town Square and during Veterans Day assemblies. These performances required students to demonstrate behavior reflecting dedication; teamwork; perseverance; and respect for peers, adults, and equipment. Other activities have included doing yard work for local residents and helping in homeless shelters and food pantries. Volunteering at a homeless shelter or a food pantry affords the opportunity to teach empathy skills and other positive behavior traits, since many of the TLA students have expressed a lack of understanding and compassion for this segment of their community.

Fundamental to all community service projects is the opportunity for supervising staff to use both planned and spontaneous opportunities to directly teach students the value of teamwork and application of their ART skills in real-life situations, as well as create memories that reflect positive outcomes and are empowering to the students. Also empowering is the unsolicited praise and encouragement from those the students have served. Together, these benefits assist in building the students' behavioral repertoire, problem-solving skills, self-esteem, character, and greater sense of the community and world in which they live.

Many of the challenges to the success of the service project day occur days or weeks before the scheduled project date. Finding high-quality projects that will meet the students' needs, finding the time needed to coordinate the many aspects of the projects, and funding the projects are just a few of the challenges. Some of the challenges to project coordination include proper staffing, dividing students into groups (if more than one team or specific talent is needed), establishing a plan to handle inappropriate student behavior, ensuring that there is enough work for everyone—including the staff—and assessing the impact of the project on the students. Challenges that are less tangible and more elusive are maintaining staff motivation, building student motivation, dealing with a project gone bad, and providing follow-up teaching and processing for the students.

The opportunities are endless when a school begins to reach out to tap the gifts, talents, and desires of those living within the community they serve. Although the challenges may be many, the benefits can be priceless. People never know just how their efforts, words, and actions may impact a student's life.

Michael Julian summed it up best when he said, "It's more than just giving money, it's spending time with the kids" (Mellado & Muzikowski, 2001). Michael, while involved in gangs, drugs, violence, and other illegal and dangerous activities as a youth, became involved with the Near North Little League program created and operated by Bob Muzikowski. Through the friendship, mentoring, and spiritual support of those involved in the program, Michael has turned his life around and is now coaching one of the Little League teams. In addition to the spiritual component, the one factor that seems to ensure the success of this program is the community and corporate personnel involvement. This involvement has made the Near North Little League the largest Little League program in the United States (Mellado &Muzikowski, 2001).

4

Developing a Partnership Model

Liontos (1991) reported that partnerships with at-risk families are impossible without collaboration with other community agencies. Building high-quality partnerships must go beyond collaborating in a few projects that may or may not meet the needs of students with behavioral challenges. Partnerships develop over time with successful, well-planned projects that ultimately are rewarding to community members, school personnel, (i.e., administrators and teachers), students, and parents.

The development of models can be as diverse as the attitudes, behaviors, and motivations of students with behavioral challenges. What works for one school in one state may not work for another school in another state; what works for an urban community may not work for a rural community 30 miles away. However, there are some general guidelines that can be applied to any model. Authors associated with the Hispanic Policy Development Project (cited in Liontos, 1991) have offered some guidelines that have been successful with most at-risk students. It is important to be totally committed; obtain active support of the principal and staff; assign a project coordinator; be innovative and flexible; incorporate strong personal outreach; recognize that home visits are essential; hold the first activity at a location outside of school; pay attention to environment and format; prepare staff with inservice workshops; be prepared to provide child care, transportation, interpreters, and meals; choose different times to schedule events; and finally, refuse to give up.

In this chapter we discuss two program models: Service Learning and Project-Based Learning.

Service Learning

One way that students with E/BD show that they are becoming better able to cope with the demands around them is through their ability to function successfully in a less restrictive environment. This would include moving from a more restrictive to a less restrictive academic setting (e.g., from a special education self-contained classroom to a special education resource/support room) and increased community mobility. According to Muscott (2001), based on their learning histories, many of these students have not developed caring behaviors. They need explicit instruction in caring; that is, they need to be taught how to give to others. Consonant with an absence of caring behaviors is the problem of a limited repertoire of prosocial skills. Furthermore, by definition, these students' academic skills lag behind their chronological age. Taken together, these social and academic skill deficits pose real challenges.

Service Learning (SL) projects can provide an environment that not only enhances academic learning but also fosters caring attitudes in students. The Service Learning program has two main goals: the accumulation of knowledge and the development of character. Muscott (2001) stated that because SL projects are

> . . . strength-based and designed to be experiential, practical, and connected to the real world, they have the potential to accomplish three important goals: (1) promote [student] self-esteem and self-worth through the successful completion of projects that have social importance; (2) engage disenfranchised students in school-related activities and curriculum; and (3) reframe other people's pessimistic views of [student] worth and ability to contribute to society.

Figure 5 lays out the structure for planning a service learning project.

According to Tom Jackson (2001), of the Active Learning Foundation in Cedar City, Utah, learning is 90% of what we experience. Moreover, Tobler's research (cited in Jackson, 2001) sug-

1. Summary of lesson.
2. Curricular area.
3. Unit of instruction.
4. Contact(s) needed beyond classroom.
5. Need(s) served either in the community or in students.
6. Skills necessary to perform this service/activity.
7. Skills and benefits that student will gain.
8. Steps in lesson.
9. Reflection activity.
10. Reinforcement/celebration component.

FIGURE 5. Structuring a Service Learning Project

gests that interactive learning is more beneficial than noninteractive learning. Service Learning projects provide an interactive learning experience that is carefully planned, highly structured, and purposeful, but also fosters positive social interactions among school staff, peers, and those they serve.

Case Illustration

Recently, students with E/BD and some students with multiple needs participated in a river restoration project for the town of Rolling Meadows, Illinois (Depakadibo, 2001). Although those persons planning and coordinating the project did not rely fully on the Service Learning model, they followed the model closely. Therefore, the river restoration project is a good example of how the Service Learning structure can be implemented. The project was planned as follows:

1. *Summary of Lesson:*

   Students will develop an appreciation for the importance of maintaining our natural environment through active participation in a motivational hands-on learning experience.

2. *Curricular Area:*

   Science

3. *Unit of Instruction:*

   Environmental science, focusing on the understanding and application of the scientific method through the restoration of an eroding portion of a riverbank.

4. *Contact(s) Beyond the Classroom:*
   - School principal.
   - District administration.
   - Transportation (i.e., district bus company).
   - Grant foundation.
   - Expert from Friends of the Chicago River.
   - Rolling Meadows Public Works Department.
   - Rolling Meadows Park District.
   - Local nursery.

5. *Need(s) Served Within the Community and Among Participating Students:*
   - The surrounding community: An eroding portion of the Salt Creek riverbank will be restored, stabilized, and beautified through the placement of rocks and planting of a variety of vegetation.
   - The Learning Academy and school district: First, the project meets district science objectives and state standards. Second, the project fosters improved cohesiveness among peers within the classroom.
   - The students: First, students gain an improved understanding of the value of science and how it applies in a real-life situation. Second, students' self-esteem is enhanced through the application of their ART skills, especially skills of working with others and communication skills.

6. *Skills Necessary to Perform This Service/Activity:*
   - Cooperation, communication, following directions, self-control, respect for the environment, and respect for peers.
   - Basic knowledge of the use of tools.
   - Knowledge of the project's science application.

7. *Skills and Benefits That Students Will Gain:*
   - An understanding of the scientific method.
   - An appreciation for the value of maintaining a healthy environment.
   - Stimulated learning.
   - Immediate tangible reward of a completed project/goal.
   - A sense of accomplishment.
   - An understanding of the positive effects of working as a team.
   - A positive and rewarding memory.
8. *Steps in Lesson:*
   - Prepare in the classroom through lectures; note taking; and research regarding the scientific method, the importance of the river, and various specific forms of vegetation to benefit the river.
   - Visit the site where the project will take place to study the amount of oxygen, temperature, acid, and specimens in the river.
   - Analyze the data back at the classroom.
   - Spend 1 day restoring the riverbank by cutting back the bank, laying rock, and planting vegetation.
   - Spend time in the classroom reviewing the work the students have done and its application to the science lessons and the environment.
   - Return to the site to collect a second set of water samples to analyze and determine whether any environmental improvement has occurred as a result of the restoration.
   - Evaluate students' knowledge of the scientific method through quizzes and homework assignments, plus the development of an analysis of their data.
9. *Reflection Activities:*
   - Students write a letter of thanks to the Public Works Department.

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- An evaluation is conducted of the group's overall performance and application of ART skills.
- A video of the restoration day is viewed.

10. Reinforcement/Celebration Component:
    - Students' use of ART skills is acknowledged.
    - Lunch is provided by the PTA on the day of the restoration project.

Summary of the Salt Creek Restoration Project

As we suggested, the restoration project did not follow the Service Learning structure exactly; however, the project was planned in such a way that all 10 components were evident either in the proposal, in its actual implementation, or in brainstorming ways to improve the project. As a result of that planning, all students and staff were aware of the objectives to restore a portion of the riverbank. To do so, the students and staff were divided into four teams, with each team responsible for a portion of the riverbank. Each team was given individual assignments by the staff, and the team members were expected to work together to complete their tasks. As such, they were required to apply interpersonal communication and problem-solving skills to accomplish their assigned tasks.

In the end, the project proved to be a success. First, the students felt a sense of personal pride in their accomplishment and encouragement from the praise of the staff. Second, the district administration took an interest as they edited a video to be shown at a Board meeting and Foundation meeting. Third, the *Chicago Tribune* was notified of the project and came out to the project site to take pictures and interview the students. Fourth, the academic objective of demonstrating skills in the application of the scientific method was achieved.

However, a project of this kind is never without complications that challenge the strength, ability, and the flexibility of its coordinator(s). In the case of the restoration project, a major challenge arose early because of a delay in receiving the grant funds. This delay caused some stress and frustration since the funds were

needed to purchase equipment for sampling and studying the river water. After exploring other ways to purchase the necessary equipment prior to the start of the project, the project coordinator and the environmental specialist working with the staff changed the plan regarding when and how to collect the necessary water samples. Another challenge was the poor quality of information that could be derived from the samples taken from the river. For various reasons, the results were not as conclusive as predicted and the environmental impact of the project could not be fully assessed. Still, by most other standards, the project proved successful.

Project-Based Learning

Another approach that has generated interest is the Project-Based Learning model, which supporters assert can promote critical thinking, in-depth learning, and a sense of being part of a community of learners. In one recent application, a classroom teacher reported that Project-Based Learning is a valuable tool to stimulate students' learning. Project-Based Learning begins with the selection of a project that matches the grade-level curriculum. Once the scope of the project is determined, a plan is jointly developed by the students and teacher. The project plan consists of a timeline that states when the project will begin and end, a list of questions to be addressed, and an objective means of documenting what the students have learned. According to the teacher, students are into their work so intently that they are positively interacting and collaborating with one another. Once the project is completed, each student writes a self-evaluation.

5

Policy That Supports the Concept of Alternative School Programs

With the enactment of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the concept of a free, appropriate public education, or FAPE, for all children became law. That legislation also mandates that children be educated in a setting that is as close to their regular educational setting as possible, referred to as the *least restrictive environment* (LRE). Both concepts speak to opportunities for an appropriate education, but say less about the expected outcomes of that education. When students do not graduate from school prepared to fill the jobs available in today's workplace, criticism is predictable. Criticism is sometimes leveled at the schools because they fail to meet the mission of education. Indeed, many schools do have a mission statement that includes the preparation of all students for productive work. Such mission statements speak more to the educational outcomes that will benefit the community than to the traditional generalist view of education.

Designing Curricula to Meet Community Expectations

If the driving force behind the design of school curricula is the need of the community for a skilled labor force, does the school go back to the "letter of the law," providing a solid generalist educa-

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tion, or the intent of the law to meet the stated needs of the local community? Indeed, in the short run the latter is more expensive and time consuming, but, in the long run, will the public judge schools on how well they educate their children according to the technical interpretation of the law, or by how well prepared those students are to succeed in the world of work upon graduation? If the latter, more expensive, course is to be taken, then schools that provide alternative education to students with emotional or behavioral problems must develop ways not only to successfully educate those students, but also to help them integrate the behavioral skills necessary to function effectively in society. However, students who are assigned to alternative schools because of E/BD do not internalize these behaviors easily. Whether or not the alternative school has a further duty to see that students can transfer the knowledge and skills they have learned to the larger public setting can be argued on legal, social, and ethical grounds.

If the expectation is that all students should be able to integrate academic and nonacademic skills needed in the workplace, then we must be prepared to offer high-quality programs designed not only to directly instruct them in these skills, but also to establish mechanisms whereby they are able to incrementally transition those same skills into the workplace and community. Given the range of presenting problems evidenced by students with E/BD, programming that addresses their academic, social, behavioral, and vocational needs is essential.

Add-On Features to the Public Education Mandates

If a school district determines that a goal of its alternative school programs is to offer students experiences that are external to the classroom, in order to support the skills demanded of students in the larger community, then that district must accept the challenge to allocate the time and resources necessary to accomplish this goal. Limited resources commonly confound program developers, and alternative programs are no exception.

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Students who do not experience an education that includes community outreach programs are less likely to have a positive educational outcome and less likely to master replacement behavior for inappropriate or unacceptable behaviors that lead to placement in an alternative setting in the first place.

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Conclusion 6

The environment in which a child is raised has a significant impact on the child's social, emotional, behavioral, and psychological development. As Muscott (2001) pointed out, by reclaiming that environment we are able to promote attachment, achievement, autonomy, and altruism by meeting a child's basic needs for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. We believe strongly that school-community partnerships are a valuable tool to bring the relevance of academics to life, to model and develop caring attitudes toward others, and to improve the overall well-being of students with emotional or behavioral disorders.

Goal 8 of the National Education Goals, as written in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, states that every school will promote partnerships to increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of all children. In the preceding discussion, we have provided several models that have proved effective in developing school-community partnerships including Project-Based Learning and Service Learning. Regardless of the program selected, those who serve students who have or are at risk for E/BD should keep in mind three essential components of all good school-community partnerships:

1. High-quality leadership and dedicated personnel.
2. A well-developed purpose and plan for the program and strong community partnerships.
3. A strong sense that positive and enduring changes can occur in the students served by the program.

One important area that we have not addressed is the area of research. While there are many ways to quantitatively assess a

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student's' general knowledge of a given subject, it is a greater challenge to quantitatively assess a student's ability to master specific social, emotional, and behavioral skills and to transfer those skills to the larger community. Even so, data are needed to demonstrate to parents, school administrators, and funding agencies, among others, that school-community partnerships are integral to the overall success of programs for students with or at risk for E/BD. Equally significant, the data must offer strong testimony to participants in these partnerships that their efforts and devotion are changing children's lives.

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